

Fort Des Moines Historic Complex  
Des Moines  
Polk County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-121

HABS  
IOWA,  
77-DESMO,  
24-

DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
FORT DES MOINES HISTORIC COMPLEX

HABS  
IOWA,  
77-Desmo,  
24-

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: On the south side of Army Post Road at the southern edge of the City of Des Moines.

Quad: Des Moines SE

UTM:  
A 13/447800/4597280  
B 13/448825/4597280  
C 13/448825/4596800  
D 13/448725/4596740  
E 13/448725/4596630  
F 13/448700/4596630  
G 13/448600/4596430  
H 13/447800/4596430

Date of Construction: 1903-1910

Present Owners: U.S. Army Reserve, 225 E. Army Post Road, Fort Des Moines, Iowa 50315

U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, Building No. 47, Dickman Avenue, Fort Des Moines, Iowa 50315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 6014 U.S. Post Office and Court House, Omaha, Nebraska 68102

General Services Administration, Motor Pool #87, Chaffee Road, Fort Des Moines, Iowa 50315

U.S. Air Force, Civil Air Patrol, Iowa Wing, Room 529 Federal Building, 210 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

City of Des Moines, East First Street and Locust Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

University of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Science, 3200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312

Present Use:

Some buildings are actively used by the government agencies listed above; others are used for storage. Some buildings are used for storage by the indicated private institution. Other buildings are vacant.

Significance:

Fort Des Moines is significant as the site of the army training camp for black officers during World War I, the first extensive attempt to educate black officer candidates for the rigors of combat leadership. During and after World War I, the post attained recognition in medical circles for innovations in the field of orthopedics research. The fort is further significant as the home of the First WAAC Training Center during World War II, where more than 72,000 women completed training to assist the military mission, thereby fostering a greater role for women in the nation's military establishment.

Historian:

Jerome A. Greene, National Park Service,  
March, 1987

## PART II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Fort Des Moines was established in 1901 in Polk County, Iowa, four miles south of the junction of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers and the approximate center of the city of Des Moines. Named after two previous posts in the vicinity, (1) Fort Des Moines did not rise quickly; its genesis lay in the realm of politics, and its role as a regular army establishment fluctuated between activity and inactivity throughout its existence. The fort owed its beginning largely to the initiative and persuasive powers of Representative John A.T. Hull (Republican - Iowa), who, early in his second term, drew upon his influence as chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs to promote his objective. Hull's advocacy of a military post at Des Moines reflected the will of his constituency, members of which as early as 1894 began agitating for such an enterprise. Not only would an army post at Des Moines be centrally located, it would have access to numerous rail lines, both factors conducive to the transporting of troops throughout the Mississippi and Missouri river valleys. (2)

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1. The first Fort Des Moines stood at the site of present Keokuk, Iowa, between 1834 and 1837. The second occupied ground in the area of the twentieth-century fort, i.e., near the confluence of the Raccoon River with the Des Moines. Established to guard Indian lands from whites in accordance with existing treaties, the second Fort Des Moines was abandoned in 1846 when its garrison departed for the Mexican War. Francis Paul Prucha, A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States, 1789-1895 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 71. See also "Three Forts Des Moines," Annals of Iowa, XXV. Third Series (July, 1943), pp. 3-60; Brice, Petrides, and Associates, Inc., Cultural Resources of the CBD Loop Arterial Project Area, Phase II Investigation, Project No. M-2787(1)--81-77 (Waterloo and Des Moines, October, 1985); as well as issues of The Fort Des Moines Post for August 22 and 29, and September 5, 12, and 19, 1918. Authority for the naming of the third Fort Des Moines is contained in General Orders No. 21, February 28, 1902. General Orders and Circulars, Adjutant General's Office, 1902 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903).

2. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1771-1961 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 1094; The Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918; Johnson Brigham, Des Moines: The Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West, together (Continued)

Following a conference with Des Moines citizens, Hull in 1894 introduced a bill calling for the creation of the army post. The proposition was defeated in Congress that year and, after its resubmission, again in 1895.(3) Objections to the post centered primarily on the existing number of cavalry and infantry regiments versus the number of available posts to accommodate them. Late in the century there were too many forts, particularly in the west; the end of the Indian wars sparked efforts to close many installations and consolidate troops at larger posts. To that end, in the early 1890s Congress had authorized the Secretary of War to accept donated land on which construction of larger forts might occur.(4) As regards Des Moines, in 1898 yet another bill introduced by Hull failed of passage, principally for the reason cited. Finally, on April 4, 1900, Congress passed a measure favoring establishment of a post there "upon the transfer and conveyance to the United States of a good and sufficient title to not less than four hundred acres of land, without cost to the United States. . . ."(5)

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2. (cont.) with the History of Polk County, Iowa (3 vols.; Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1911), II, 600; "Fort Des Moines," The Midwestern Magazine, IV (September, 1909), p. 30; Fort Des Moines, Iowa, Described and Illustrated (Des Moines: The Des Moines Booklet Company, 1904), p. 1.

3. Ibid.; Ruth A. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," Iowa and War (April, 1919), pp. 19-20. The Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918.

4. Letter to Hull, February 13, 1896. National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 94. Office of the Adjutant General. Document File, Box 232.

5. General Orders No. 48, April 12, 1900. General Orders and Circulars, Adjutant General's Office, 1900 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901). The 1895 bill called for receiving clear title to 320 acres. See H.R. 1703, December 16, 1895, and H.R. 5988, January 7, 1898, copies in NA, 94. Office of the Adjutant General. Document File, Box No. 232. In promoting the Des Moines site in 1898, Hull wrote Acting Secretary of War George D. Meiklejohn that : "Des Moines is the largest city in Iowa, with a population of over seventy thousand people and is one of the great railroad centers. . . . We can reach any bridge on the Mississippi river touching our part of the soil in a few hours' run and are within easy striking distance of the great cities, Chicago, Saint Louis, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Omaha and Kansas (Continued)

Despite the passage of the bill with the general approval of the Des Moines populace, there remained certain local opposition to building the new fort. Labor believed that an army post might threaten its interests, while women's groups complained of the prospect of declining morality because of its presence. Evidently, economic considerations managed to sway the Des Moines citizenry in favor of the fort, for as an unidentified newspaper editorialized in 1903, "it means the expenditure of thousands upon thousands of dollars here each year."<sup>(6)</sup> That incentive no doubt contributed to the speedy acquisition of land for the project as specified in the enabling legislation. On December 14, 1900, as directed by the Secretary of War, a board of three officers met with a committee of Des Moines citizens to select the location for the post. The board visited a site where options had been secured four miles south of the center of the city. The ground, reported the members, "has excellent soil, [is] gently rolling and susceptible of very easy drainage. [The site] has all the advantages required by a military post of ordinary dimensions and would accomodate [sic] a garrison of a thousand men."<sup>(7)</sup> Although the site lacked a sufficient water supply, as well as railroad and street car facilities, these concerns were met by the Des Moines group who guaranteed the requisite improvements, including delivery to the post of "200,000 gallons of potable water per day." Moreover, building material in the form of brick could be obtained locally. The army board left Des Moines satisfied as to the adequacy of the site and the conditions agreed upon by the city, thereby recommending its acceptance by the War Department.<sup>(8)</sup> In June, 1901, title to two 160-acre tracts lying south of

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5. (cont.) City. As you know we are also in the center of a great agricultural country where troops can be maintained at a minimum cost." January 15, 1898. NA, RG 94. Office of the Adjutant General. Document File, Box No. 232. See also Meiklejohn to Hull, January 26, 1898, quoted in Secretary of War Eliher Root to President William McKinley, April 4, 1900. Ibid.

6. Quoted in Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 23.

7. "Proceedings of a Board of Officers convened at Des Moines, Iowa, December 14, 1900. . . ." NA, RG 94. Document File, Box No. 2367.

8. Ibid.; Statement by Acting Secretary of War George D. Meiklejohn, December 20, 1900. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box No. 2367.

the city and west of Raccoon River were conveyed by James Denney and Robertson M. Brisco, respectively, to the United States, as a result of a fundraising effort by Des Moines citizens that netted almost \$40,000.(9) On August 5, the War Department announced that 400 acres had been accepted for the new post:

The United States having acquired the northeast quarter of section 33, and the northwest quarter and the north half of the southwest quarter of section 34, township 78 north, range 24 west of the fifth principal meridian, as the site for a military post near Des Moines, Iowa, the same is hereby announced as a military reservation.(10)

In subsequent years the reservation grew with the acquisition of additional land totaling 240 acres, so that by 1908 the grounds covered 640 acres, "more or less."(11) Necessary rights of way were secured in Polk and Warren Counties in 1902, and revocable easement licenses were granted the Interurban Railway Company (1902), the Iowa Telephone

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9. United States Military Reservations, National Cemeteries, and Military Parks. Title, Jurisdiction, Etc. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 129; Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 23; Brigham, Des Moines, II, 600. Members of the committee responsible for raising the money were: F.M. Hubbell, C.L. Watrous, H.S. Butler, F.M. Garrison, B.S. Walker, J.G. Rounds, C.W. Johnston, W.L. White, and Lewis Schooler. Ibid., p. 601.

10. General Orders No. 103, August 5, 1901. General Orders and Circulars, Adjutant General's Office, 1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902). See also "Report of the Quartermaster-General," October 9, 1901. Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 402.

11. Military Reservations, United States in General (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1941). One acre was acquired in 1905 from John Fullerton; the remaining acreage was deeded thereby in 1908: Thomas Robertson and wife, 80 acres; Mary Burgett and husband, 40 acres; John W. Burgett and wife, 40 acres; and John Fullerton, 79 acres. United States Military Reservations, p. 129. See also, U.S. Congress, House. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting a copy of a communication from the Secretary of War, submitting an estimate of appropriation for purchase of land adjoining the military reservation at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. H. Doc. 791, 60th Cong., 1st sess., 1908, pp. 1-2.

Company (1906), and the Des Moines Terminal Company (1906), the latter for constructing railroad tracks on the reserve.(12) In 1902 Congress appropriated \$27,750 for the acquisition of 525 acres four miles south of the Fort Des Moines site over the line in Warren County for use by the army as a target range. Government purchase of the site occurred early the next year. In 1908 Congress appropriated \$35,850 for 358½ additional acres for the target range after local officials protested that there existed a danger of bullets flying onto adjacent lands.(13)

Late in December, 1901, Congressman Hull wrote Secretary Root, requesting that the new post be called "Fort Des Moines," a courtesy that was honored.(14) The fort would be built to accommodate a regiment of cavalry, said Root.

The grounds should be so laid out and the plans for the necessary structures should be so arranged that after the accommodations for the first squadron have been completed the accommodations necessary to provide for the second squadron may be constructed, and, when they are completed, the further provision may be made for the third squadron.(15)

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12. Ibid., pp. 129-30; Military Reservations, United States in General.

13. U.S. Congress, House. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting a copy of a communication from the Secretary of War submitting an estimate of appropriation for the purchase of target range at Des Moines, Iowa, H. Doc. 394, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902; General Orders No. 33, March 19, 1903. General Orders and Circulars, Adjutant General's Office, 1903 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903); Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 27. See also, U.S. Congress, House. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting a copy of a communication from the Secretary of War submitting an Estimate of appropriation for Shooting Galleries, Ranges, etc., at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, H. Doc. 598, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904. Range shooting began September 20, 1904. Army and Navy Journal, September 24, 1904.

14. Hull to Root, December 28, 1901. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box No. 2367.

15. Root to the Adjutant General, January 24, 1901, in ibid. Hull later recalled that Root wanted to erect only a two-company infantry post. After "considerable debate between the Secretary and myself, he finally issued his orders to make it a Regimental Post." Hull to E.P. Harlan, (Continued)



With land acquisition assured, army officials turned their attention to construction of the post. Estimates of \$519,000 for the work failed in Congress, however, and in March, 1901, that body approved only \$200,000 for the project. Yet it remained more than a year before Secretary Root directed the construction to proceed. During the fiscal year from July 1, 1902, to June 30, 1903, almost the entire sum appropriated for the building of Fort Des Moines was expended. Architects, engineers, and assorted mechanics began construction of brick buildings based on standardized plans from the Quartermaster General's Office. These structures were erected around the perimeter of a rectangular parade ground measuring 900 feet north-south by 2000 feet east-west. On November 13, 1903, formal dedication ceremonies were conducted at the fort. Iowa Governor Albert B. Cummins hoisted the United States flag over the post, and prominent attendees included Congressman Hull, Brigadier General John C. Bates, commanding the Department of the Missouri in which administrative domain Fort Des Moines reposed, and Des Moines Mayor James M. Brenton. An elaborate barbecue, drawing more than 22,000 people, capped the festivities.(16)

Little more than two weeks after the dedication the first troops arrived to garrison Fort Des Moines. On December 1, 1903, two companies of the all-black Twenty-fifth Infantry took temporary station there pending the arrival of a larger contingent of cavalymen from service in the Philippines. The Eleventh Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Earl D. Thomas, became the first permanent regiment to be assigned to the post. As of June, 1905, troops present consisted of headquarters, field, staff, and band, along with the Second and Third Squadrons, Eleventh Cavalry. Many of the soldiers present were recruits assigned for training in the cavalry arm. In March, 1906, the First Squadron

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15. (cont.) September 15, 1909. Copy in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Manuscripts Division.

16. General Orders No. 29, March 11, 1901. General Orders and Circulars, Adjutant General's Office, 1901. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902); Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918; Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 24-25; Brigham, Des Moines, II, 600-01.

arrived from Fort Riley, Kansas, giving Fort Des Moines its first full regimental complement. These troops remained at the post until replaced in June, 1907, by members of the Second Cavalry. At that time post strength stood at 474 officers and men, although a year later, with the addition of more Second Cavalry troops, the figure had climbed to 813. Between the time of the premier occupation in 1903 and the 1907 assignment of the Second Cavalry the fort was substantially completed, its buildings consisting of expansive brick quarters, stables, and storehouses of the latest military design. In October, 1904, the Army and Navy Journal reported that "the entire post is now lit up with electric lights." When finished, Fort Des Moines could accommodate upwards of 1200 officers and enlisted men, although the mean strength of the garrison prior to June, 1907, was far below that figure. After the Second Cavalry arrived, the average strength hovered around 800.(17)

Garrison life at Fort Des Moines during the period following its establishment and preceding World War I was largely routine. During the summer and fall of 1906, however, the cavalry participated in one of the final confrontations with Indians in the United States. A band of Utes left their reservation in northern Utah and passed through Wyoming enroute to join the Sioux in South Dakota. Attempting to head off the Utes, the army sent the Second Squadron of the Second Cavalry,

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17. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History, pp. 26-28; Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918; Army and Navy Journal, October 15, 1904; "Sketch of the Second Cavalry," The Midwestern Magazine, II (May, 1908), pp. 39-68; "Report Department of the Missouri," July 13, 1905, in Annual Report of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 78. The Second Squadron, without horses, was first to reach Fort Des Moines. "Report of the Department of the Missouri," August 9, 1904, in Annual Report of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1904 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), pp. 64-65; Army and Navy Journal, March 17, 1906; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," August 12, 1907, in War Department, U.S.A. Annual Reports, 1907 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), p. 102; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," June 30, 1908, in War Department Annual Reports, 1908 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 88; Army and Navy Journal, January 4, 1908.

commanded by Major Frederick W. Sibley, from Fort Des Moines to Thunder Butte Creek, on the Cheyenne River Reservation, South Dakota, in late October, 1907. This unit was shortly augmented by the remaining squadrons of the Second Cavalry under Colonel Frank West, during which absence Company K, Sixteenth Infantry, from Fort Crook, Nebraska, garrisoned the post. The Utes were halted near Fort Meade in western South Dakota and were later allowed to reside on the Sioux reservation at Cheyenne River. The Second Cavalry, meantime, returned to Fort Des Moines in December, with the exception of part of Troop L, which was retained to escort some of the dissident tribesmen back to Utah. The balance of the troop stayed at Thunder Butte Creek until the summer of 1907. (18)

More often the Fort Des Moines garrison hosted training exercises than served as a springboard for Indian control operations. The soldiers frequently performed cavalry exhibition drills in the surrounding region, particularly at state and county fairs. In August, 1904, the Second Squadron, Eleventh Cavalry, completed maneuvers at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines. According to one account:

The maneuvers on the track received much applause, but the principal attractions of the turn-out were the Cossack charges and Roman rescue races, participated in by Troop G only, which is generally considered the best drilled and conducted troop in the squadron. . . . This same troop is going to march to the county fair, about twenty miles from the post, and give exhibitions for a few days. . . . (19)

On July 4, 1905, assorted field day activities involving the Eleventh Cavalry took place at the fort, with the Third Squadron winning the

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18. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 29-30; Army and Navy Journal, November 9, 1907; Army and Navy Journal, November 23, 1907; Army and Navy Journal, December 21, 1907; "Report Northern Division," July 1, 1907, War Department, U.S.A. Annual Reports, 1907, pp. 70-72, 122-25.

19. Army and Navy Journal, September 3, 1904.

exercises, which included several boxing exhibitions. Also of noteworthy mention were maneuvers held at the post in 1906 and 1907 involving units from Forts Crook, Omaha, Russell, Meade, Riley, and Crawford, all within the Department of the Missouri. In 1907 the cavalry contingent consisted of the Second Cavalry, from Fort Des Moines, plus the Fourth, Seventh, and Seventeenth regiments. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Field Artillery regiments also participated, as did the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Infantry regiments.(20) Troops from Fort Des Moines also took part in the encampment of the Iowa National Guard near the post, as well as in military exercises in conjunction with a stock show at St. Joseph, Missouri, and a drill exhibition at Omaha, all in 1907. The latter two events were repeated in 1908, and in the following year the troops from Fort Des Moines and other departmental posts conducted another large military tournament at the state fairgrounds in Des Moines.(21)

From September 20 to 25, 1909, an elaborate and carefully planned army tournament was held at Des Moines involving infantry, cavalry, and artillery from posts throughout the region. More than 3300 officers and men, together with nearly 2000 horses, converged on the city to participate in the events. President William Howard Taft attended the exercises and presented trophies. The program included contests in wall scaling, Roman horse racing, infantry and cavalry drill, bridge building, machine gun competition, mountain battery drill, pack mule loading, signal exercises, hospital corpsmen races, and tug-of-war. Demonstrations of field baking, rescue operations, and army dirigibles were also presented.(22)

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20. Army and Navy Journal, October 15, 1904; Army and Navy Journal, July 15, 1905; Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918.

21. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 28-29; Army and Navy Journal, November 14, 1908.

22. Brigadier General Charles Morton to the Adjutant General, November 30, 1909. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box 5606; "Official Program. Military Tournament, United States Army, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 20-25, 1909." Ibid.; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," August 1, 1910, in War Department Annual Reports, 1910 (Washington: (Continued)

Leisure activity at Fort Des Moines during its early years took several forms. Baseball and football remained popular, with the post team traveling about the region to meet its competition among several Iowa towns. In 1906 a post basketball team was organized of members of Troop A, Eleventh Cavalry. In March, they met defeat at the hands of a Des Moines YMCA-sponsored team. Three years later, officers from the fort assembled a hockey team which on New Year's Day, 1909, defeated the Des Moines Ramblers by the score of 4 to 1. The band provided welcome diversion, too, and often serenaded enthusiastic throngs of soldiers, officers, and families in the evenings. Balls, or cotillions, took place with regularity, often in the post administration building or in the various troop quarters. In 1905 a large civilian-operated dance hall was erected just beyond the north entrance to the post, along the electric street car line. And some soldiers partook of religious revival meetings at the fort. Formal religious ceremonies were conducted each Sunday, with a Catholic service performed in the morning and a general service for all faiths in the evening.(23)

In March, 1905, an unusual social event occurred:

John Voetglin, a general prisoner at the fort, was married to a young woman of Des Moines. The bridegroom stood during the ceremony with a ball and chain attached to himself. After the pair were united the wife returned to her home in Des Moines, and the husband, guarded by two sentries, returned to the guardhouse.(24)

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22. (cont.) Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 63-67. For a breakdown of troops represented, see ibid., pp. 76-77; The Midwestern Magazine, IV (September, 1909).

23. Army and Navy Journal, September 24, 1904; Army and Navy Journal, March 11, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, May 30, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, June 3, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, June 27, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, October 21, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, October 28, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, Jan. 9, 1909.

24. Army and Navy Journal, April 1, 1905.

Officers and men and their wives also partook of activities in adjacent Des Moines, such as an appearance by the noted actress, Sarah Bernhardt in the play, Camille, in late April, 1906. Women of the fort participated in such activities as bridge and "five hundred" parties, receptions, dinners, sleigh parties, dances, and masquerade balls. Numerous weddings were also held at the post, and in April, 1907, an Easter egg hunt took place there.(25) As was typical of towns adjacent to army stations, businesses catering to the soldiers' off-duty interests also sprang up, and in 1908 the Iowa Prohibition Party railed against the presence of the post, demanding the removal of Fort Des Moines, "as it has become the principal supporter of the saloon, the gambling den, [and] the brothel. . . ." Today our girls are not safe upon the streets of Des Moines after night, for the town is . . . patrolled in every direction by the bum soldiers watching for their prey."(26)

A major organizational change occurred at Fort Des Moines in late 1909 and early 1910 when the Second Cavalry squadrons were transferred to the Philippines. In January, 1910, the Sixth Cavalry, newly arrived from the Philippines, took station at the post. Few events of more than routine consequence happened over the next few years. During 1910 the army assisted Iowa state officials in establishing an instructional camp for militia officers, an endeavor ably assisted by Troop F, Sixth Cavalry from the post. Between April, 1911, and January and February, 1912, a single officer and thirty-nine enlisted men garrisoned Fort Des Moines while the balance of the Sixth Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Charles M. O'Connor, traveled to Douglas, Arizona, to take station along the Mexican border during the turbulent days of revolution

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25. Army and Navy Journal, May 5, 1906; Army and Navy Journal, December 7, 1907; Army and Navy Journal, January 18, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, February 1, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, February 15, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, February 29, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, April 4, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, April 18, 1908.

26. Army and Navy Journal, July 4, 1908, quoting The Des Moines Register and Leader.

in Mexico. A year later, in February, 1913, the regiment formed part of the Second Division and again moved to the border, remaining there and ultimately joining in the U.S. seizure of Vera Cruz, Mexico the following year. The Sixth thereafter was assigned patrol duty in the southern states. Beyond the few troops required to maintain the government property, no regular army units were assigned to Fort Des Moines during the interim, and the post, for all practical purposes, was vacated.(27)

That status changed radically following the entry of the United States into World War I. The most significant development at Fort Des Moines was the establishment there of the Officers' Training Camp for Colored Students. Two series of sixteen officers' training camps each were set up around the country to run between May and November, 1917. These camps trained only white officers. Prior to 1917 what few black officers served in the U.S. Army belonged to the several segregated regiments. The last black to graduate from West Point, Charles D. Young, did so in 1889, and he retired a colonel before the war began. Other blacks had attained commissioned rank through reserve training but few were on duty when war was declared. The situation prompted certain black protest.(28)

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27. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 30-32; Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," July 15, 1911, in War Department Annual Reports, 1911 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), p. 64; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," July 1, 1912, in War Department Annual Reports, 1912 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 45. Photographs of the post ca. 1910 are in "Fort Des Moines," The Midwestern Magazine, IV (July, 1910), pp. 30-49.

28. Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War (1917-19) (3 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), III, 79-81; Richard J. Stillman, II, Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968), p. 16. Two more camps for white officers were held between January and September, 1918. In addition, three camps exclusively established for Puerto Rican officers were established in 1917 and 1918, as well as several Reserve Officer Training Corps camps and Central Officers' Training Schools. Order of Battle, III, 81-87.

On May 6, 1917, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker inquired of the possibility for training black officers through the facilities of Howard University.(29) On advice of the War College Division of the War Department, separate officer training camps for black citizens were recommended. The division chief expressed what was probably the common view of the day regarding military training for blacks:

It is believed that there are many colored men of good character and education who, with training, would make suitable company officers for the colored organizations forming part of the contemplated draft force. Whether or not they should be utilized as officers is . . . more of a political than a military question, but in general it is believed that our colored citizens make better soldiers if commanded by white officers than they do under officers of their own race.(30)

By late May the Army had settled upon Fort Des Moines for the "Colored Training Camp," which would commence June 18 and last three months. Colonel Charles C. Ballou, a West Point graduate and former commander of black troops, was assigned to command the camp with thirteen white officers to assist with its administration detailed from within the Central Department, earlier reorganized from the old Department of the Missouri. No new construction was authorized; Ballou received instructions that tentage would be used if existing barracks and other buildings proved insufficient.(31) On May 28, throughout the six

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29. Baker to Chief of Staff, Major General Hugh L. Scott, May 6, 1917. NA, RG 94. Document file, Box 8983. Howard University President S.M. Newman offered the school grounds and buildings for use as a training camp for 1,000 men during the summer of 1917. Newman to Ralph A. Hayes, Secretary to the Secretary of War, May 11, 1917. Ibid.

30. Brigadier General Joseph E. Kuhn to Scott, May 6, 1917. Ibid.

31. Adjutant General W.T. Johnson to Commanding General, Central Department, May 29, 1917. Ibid.; McCain to Commanding General, Central Department, May 31, 1917. Ibid. Ballou's assistants were: Major Charles W. Castle, senior instructor; Majors Ralph E. Ingram and Girard Sturtevant, instructors; James G. McIlroy, adjutant; Captain Wallace, quartermaster; plus Captains Robert O. Ragsdale, Edgar Z. Steever, Benjamin F. Ristine, and James W. Everington, and Lieutenants James L. Frink, William Nalle, James G. Ord, and Max S. Murray. Army  
(Continued)



army departments, candidates for admission to the black officers' training camp, formally designated the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, took the requisite examinations to qualify for the 1,250 vacancies. One thousand officer candidates came from among civilian applicants, while 250 were regular army non-commissioned officers selected from among the all-black Ninth and Tenth cavalry and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth infantry regiments.(32) Perhaps appropriately, the candidates from the Twenty-fifth represented somewhat of a historical tradition at Fort Des Moines; fourteen years earlier the unit had contributed the first troops to garrison the newly completed post.

One goal of the camp was to determine whether its graduates might constitute officer cadre for an entire black division, with components of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Less than a month into the program Colonel Ballou reported that because of the relatively small number of officer candidates and their "backwardness . . . in acquiring practical knowledge of unfamiliar subjects by study of books," among other military-related reasons, the graduates of the Fort Des Moines camp would be best suited to serve as infantry officers.(33) Supporting Ballou's assessment, Central Department Commander, Major General Thomas H. Barry filed his opinion "that these candidates should be developed solely as infantry officers for assignment to regiments of colored infantry of a division."(34) The assessments of Ballou and Barry seem to have been

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31. (cont.) and Navy Journal, June 23, 1917. Ballou, who went on to command the all-black 92nd Infantry Division, was shortly succeeded by Colonel D.J. Hunt. Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 33; Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918.

32. Ibid.; Army and Navy Journal, June 2, 1917; John L. Thompson, History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp for 1917 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa (Des Moines: The Bystander, 1917), p. 1.

33. Adjutant General to Commanding General, Central Department, May 29, 1917. NA, RG 94. Doc. File, Box 8983; Ballou to Adjutant General, July 10, 1917. Ibid.

34. Barry to Adjutant General, July 13, 1917. Ibid.

based both upon practical circumstances and prevailing social views regarding blacks, although Ballou evinced a sensitivity in presenting his conclusions that was doubtless rooted in his former experience with black troops. In the end, the War Department concurred with the judgement of Ballou.(35) The officers graduated from the camp at Fort Des Moines were expected to serve the needs of sixteen black infantry regiments raised in the divisional training areas and composed of an anticipated 687,000 drafted men (only 350,000 were actually inducted). Any enlisted men left over were to be organized into additional units to serve the needs of staff departments and noncombatant support purposes.(36)

Although the black officers' training camp was projected to end on September 15, 1917, the army delayed its closing one month because the draft call for black soldiers had been postponed. Consequently, on October 18, 639 black officers received commissions from Adjutant General W.T. Johnson; of this number, 106 became captains, 329 first lieutenants, and 204 second lieutenants. One hundred ninety-eight members of the all-black regular army regiments won appointments in either the Officers' Reserve Corps or the National Army. Many officers graduated from the Fort Des Moines program served with the all-black Ninety-second Division in France in 1918. The unit performed meritoriously in successive combat operations. Several officers won the Distinguished Service Cross, while one entire battalion of the 367th Infantry received honors from the French government.(37)

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35. Adjutant General to Barry, July 19, 1917. Ibid.

36. Major General Tasker H. Bliss to Adjutant General, August 1, 1917. NA, RG 407. Central Decimal Files. Project Files, 1917-1925, Box 1169.

37. Letter from Major E.G. Bingham, October, 1917. NA, RG 391. World War I Organization Records. Medical Department, General Hospital #26, Box 1066; Army and Navy Journal, October 17, 1917; Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 33; Order of Battle, III, 81. The names of the 198 regular army men appear in Army and Navy Journal, November 3, 1917. Capsule biographies of camp attendees are in Thompson, Colored Officers Training Camp.

Despite the achievement of the establishment, operation, and conclusion of the camp, societal attitudes changed imperceptibly and military discrimination persisted against blacks. While the training camp reflected the ideals of the army in trying to deal with racial segregation, it also reflected the shortcomings of society in the United States in coming to terms with equality in areas of economics, social development, and education. Black leaders were quick to criticize the training camp. Wrote W.E.B. DuBois, a prominent black reformer and editor: "At the colored officer-training camp, no instruction was given in artillery and a deadline was established by which no one was commissioned higher than captain, despite several recommendations." (38) Nonetheless, at the time the achievement of the camp was generally viewed most positively and heralded as "an important epoch" in the quest for civil rights among blacks. (39)

Besides the Officers' Training Camp for Colored Students, Fort Des Moines hosted a Training Camp for Colored Medical Personnel, which lasted from July 26 to November 13, 1917, overlapping to some extent the former camp. Attendees consisted of 118 officers of the Medical Department. Course graduates totaled 104 medical officers, 12 dental officers, and 948 enlisted men. Further activity at the fort came in June and July, 1917, when Batteries A, B, and C (artillery), and Company A (engineers), Iowa National Guard camped east of the enlisted men's barracks. The artillery units soon moved to an encampment site at the state fairgrounds, while the engineer unit transferred away. (40)

Following the completion of the black officers' training camp and that for black medical personnel, Fort Des Moines was again nearly vacated.

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38. Quoted in Stillman, Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces, p. 18.

39. Thompson, Colored Officers Training Camp, p. 8.

40. Order of Battle, III, 271, 868; Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," p. 34.

Wartime conditions soon dictated its use once more, this time as an important army medical facility. Such use had been contemplated earlier. In July, 1917, the Surgeon General received authorization to use the barracks for hospital needs and to build any additional facilities he required. Within four months of its tenure as a training center, and after requisite construction had occurred, the post was designated as a departmental base hospital affording highly specialized treatment for bedridden soldiers. In August, 1918, Fort Des Moines was entirely converted for medical purposes and designated as a department base hospital. This status was shortly upgraded on September 21, 1918, to that of a general hospital under exclusive administration of the surgeon general. The hospital provided the same essential services as the base hospital, although its primary mission became reconstruction treatment of war casualties from overseas. The redesignation as U.S. General Hospital No. 26 required that the facility be expanded to accommodate 1,500 patients. The general hospital at Fort Des Moines functioned until October 15, 1919, employing 77 officers, 662 enlisted men, and 111 nurses at the post. The peak period of operation came in the wake of the Armistice, and in December, 1918, the number of patients stood at 1,829.(41)

Operations of the reconstruction hospital brought structural additions and changes to Fort Des Moines. Among other things, the barracks were

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41. Order of Battle, III, 248, 264, 868; Excerpts from General Orders 1, March 7, 1918, General Orders 8, March 31, 1918, General Orders 49, September 24, 1918, and General Orders 25, September 21, 1919. NA, RG 391. World War I Organization Records. Medical Department, General Hospital #26, Box 1066; Letter from Major E.G. Bingham, October, 1917, in *ibid*; Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 34-35. Gallaher stated that in December, 1918, the hospital contained 1,158 beds and was managed by 31 officers, 79 nurses, and 466 enlisted men. *Ibid.*, p. 35. The specific dates of correspondence and decisions leading to the establishment of General Hospital No. 26 are given in The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War. Military Hospitals in the United States (10 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), V, 569-71.

converted into hospital wards, while the old cavalry stables were similarly transformed. Other additions, however, were disapproved after the Armistice. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander T. Cooper directed the medical expansion and oversaw the early administration of the hospital. Major Herbert H. Frothingham succeeded Cooper and was himself succeeded by Colonel George F. Juenemann. Many of the men sent to Fort Des Moines required orthopedic treatment, and more than 500 were amputee survivors of European battlefields. Neuropsychiatric medicine and X-ray technology also proved valuable to the disabled men who often spent months recovering from wounds and emotional distress at the post. Convalescent soldiers honed occupational skills and sought amusement in vocational, educational, and diversional classes set up by the Red Cross and other agencies. Some of these classes taught the men rudimentary concepts of reading, writing, and arithmetic, while others presented basic training in farming, animal husbandry, auto repair, typing, woodworking, electrical wiring, and stenography. Decline in the number of patients began in May, 1919, so that by October only 673 remained. On advice of the Surgeon General, the general hospital was discontinued and the facility reverted to a post hospital. During its service in 1918-19, the hospital treated thousands of cases of sickness and injury, including 7,425 wounded from the war.(42)

With the employment of Fort Des Moines as an army hospital during and following World War I, the post experienced numerous changes, structural and otherwise. New Red Cross, YMCA, and Knights of Columbus buildings were erected. Medical training continued for officers, enlisted men, nurses, and student nurses, with many going overseas

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42. Medical Department, 569-71; Order of Battle, III, 868; "Retreat." The Fort Des Moines Post. U.S.A. General Hospital No. 26. Fort Des Moines, Iowa (Np, nd [ca. 1919]); Gallaher, "Fort Des Moines in Iowa History," pp. 35-36; "Educational Service." NA, RG 391. General Hospital #26, Box 1066. The army earlier envisioned expanding the general hospital, housing it in the old Ford building in Des Moines. No construction began on this building before the Armistice took effect, however, and the project was abandoned. See "Report, Ft. Des Moines, Iowa. App. 2, Vol. 151. Constr. Div. 1919." NA, RG 391.

upon completion of their courses. On July 4, 1918, two thousand visitors attended Independence Day celebrations at Fort Des Moines, and on July 12 the first of many soldier patients arrived for medical treatment from overseas. He was Captain Bert L. Smith of the Eighteenth Infantry, A.E.F.) Later that month enlisted men of the fort published the first weekly edition of The Fort Des Moines Post, a local news tabloid that lasted until October, 1919. In August, medical authorities imposed a short-lived quarantine for Vincent's Angina, the organism for which sickness was then common in the midwestern states.(43) This was followed within two months by an infection of Spanish Influenza and the post was placed under quarantine:

Orders [were] issued prohibiting all gatherings of crowds; such as at the dances in the "Y" or Red Cross buildings, etc. Each room in the Fort was measured cubically, and its capacity was stated on a card displayed on the door. Mess tables were divided lengthwise with a strip of cheese cloth. All beds in the barracks were separated one from another by sheets. The use of gauze masks was ordered, to be worn in all buildings.(44)

Treatment of flu-stricken soldiers lasted through the balance of 1918; three hundred cases were reported at Fort Des Moines, including twenty-two deaths. On Christmas, the Red Cross provided each man with candy, fruit, cigarettes, and a cane. Christmas services took place at the YMCA building.(45)

Early in 1919 several new buildings were completed, including a large auditorium and a Knights of Columbus building. Course offerings of the Educational Division increased, while, in April, the training school for army nurses closed. In May, flying ace Captain Eddie Rickenbacker visited the fort, as did the department commander, Major General Leonard

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43. "War Diaries," in Captain W.S. Sharpe to Surgeon General, October 3, 1918. NA, RG 391. General Hospital #26, Box 1066; "Retreat".

44. "War Diary of U.S. General Hospital No. 26, Fort Des Moines, Iowa." NA, RG 391. General Hospital #26, Box 1066.

45. Ibid.; "Epidemic of Influenza." Ibid.

Wood. During June a field meet was organized for the patients, with such events as a 50-yard dash, tug-of-war, and a wheel chair race involving numerous contestants from among the wards.(46)

Fort Des Moines made lasting contributions in the field of orthopedics research in 1918-19. Because of delays in receiving supplies from the government, officers and men of the orthopedic workshop improvised with available materials. As an observer recounted,

During the past few weeks they have procured an artificial leg, possessing certain features, which they believe may be of interest. By the use of a foot, an ankle block, knee joints and thigh cuff, . . . a leg can be built directly on the patient by using building paper and yellow (potato) dextrin glue. . . . It may be completely finished and ready for use in about three days. . . .

Advantages of the "Fort Des Moines Leg" over the government provisional leg were that it was inexpensive, durable, easy to fit, and quicker to produce. Many amputee soldiers discharged from the general hospital wore the newly conceived artificial limb.(47)

For the next eleven months Fort Des Moines returned to an unfamiliar quietude that contrasted greatly with its wartime activity. In August, 1920, the Fourteenth Cavalry arrived and more or less reestablished the pre-war cavalry post. One improvement initiated in 1921 was the planting of trees and shrubbery to enhance the landscape, a

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46. Ibid.

47. M.J. Dempsey to Ralph A. Bard, Director, Department of Military Relief, October 25, 1918. Ibid.; "Retreat". The "Fort Des Moines Leg," fitted for amputations below the knee, was further described as having "the peculiar feature of . . . an ankle joint and a stump socket made of paper and glue and fashioned to the stump to be fitted. The foot and ankle block were carved out of seasoned willow wood. The paper socket is made of ordinary medium weight building paper, torn into strips, and dextrine glue. The strips are thoroughly wet with the glue and are placed snugly, several layers thick, over the stump to be fitted. This is then taken off, carefully dried, and fitted to the willow foot with ankle joint." "Medical Service." Ibid.

project aided by the loan of a civilian landscape architect by the City of Des Moines.(48) Throughout the 1920s Fort Des Moines served as a Citizens Military Training Camp (CMTC) one of many preparedness centers established after World War I to accommodate perceived national defense needs. Under the system a young man attended the military camp for one month to "make him a better son, a better citizen, and thereby enhance his value to his family, himself, his community, and to his country."(49) One thousand youths went through the Fort Des Moines program under the guidance of an army cadre expressly selected to conduct the program.(50) In a typical class,

the Infantry students were organized into two battalions, the 1st (Iowa) Battalion consisting of Companies "A," "B," and "C"; and the 2nd (Nebraska) Battalion consisting of Companies "E," "F," and "G". Company "I" (Missouri) was attached to the Nebraska Battalion. The Artillery candidates from the States of Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas were assigned to Battery "K". All cavalry personnel from the States of Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri comprised Troop "L".(51)

After the training, the young men were discharged and sent to their homes. CMTC would resume the following year.(52)

A proposal in 1929-30 to change the name of the post to Fort Hull, after the congressman who initiated the legislation for its existence, went unimplemented. The Fourteenth Cavalry occupied Fort Des Moines routinely through the balance of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s. In October, 1922, the Second Battalion, Eighteenth Field Artillery, was

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48. Commanding Officer, Fourteenth Cavalry, to Adjutant General, February 10, 1921. NA, RG 407. Central Decimal Files, Project Files, 1917-1925, Box 1169.

49. The Citizen. Volume II. Seventh Corps. Fort Des Moines, Iowa, 1923 (Chicago: Military Training Camps Association, n.d. [1923?]), p. 28.

50. Ibid., pp. 28-30.

51. Ibid., p. 30.

52. Ibid.



organized at the fort, remaining there until 1933. In 1925 the Ninth Field Artillery was also stationed there. As of December, 1928, the garrison included men of the headquarters and two squadrons of the cavalry regiment who practiced horseback military maneuvers in the drill hall, besides men of a battalion of the Eighteenth Field Artillery, as well as the Second Battalion, Seventeenth Infantry, consisting of four companies. Total strength of the post stood at 848 officers and men. Almost five years later, in May, 1933, the garrison had changed negligibly, although the Seventeenth Infantry battalion was gone. Nine troops and batteries were present and the Fourteenth Cavalry was still the principal unit. In addition, members of the Civilian Conservation Corps now utilized some buildings on the post.(53) Between that time and September, 1939, the CCC representation increased greatly, and a large number of temporary quarters were raised to house its members. The addition of the CCC program at Fort Des Moines created crowded conditions at the post for the army personnel still stationed there, members of the Fourteenth Cavalry and part of the Eightieth Field Artillery, a motorized howitzer regiment. To make matters worse, the post also functioned as a recruit center where new enlistees first underwent the rigors of army life. Throughout the 1930s the troops made periodic journeys to Arkansas, Minnesota, and elsewhere to participate in training exercises, leaving the post nearly vacated except for an operational crew and whatever CCC enrollees were present.(54)

The officers and men stationed at Fort Des Moines during the 1920s and 1930s, the so-called "period between the wars," typified what is now

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53. R.T. Edwards, "History of Fort Des Moines" (Manuscript dated March 19, 1925, in the History Library, State Historical Society of Iowa; Des Moines Tribune, October 31, 1929; Des Moines Tribune, January 10, 1930; Des Moines Tribune, September 12, 1933; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Repair of Barrack Buildings 22 and 23, January 16, 1929. NA, RG 94. Central Files, 1926-39, Box 2998; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Restoration of Barrack Building #25, August 30, 1932. Ibid.

54. Correspondence relative to construction of motor repair shop, August-October, 1939. Ibid.; Des Moines Tribune, October 26, 1939; Des Moines Tribune, January 11, 1940.

referred to as "the old army." Army routine at the post during this time is recounted in the following portrait from 1934:(55)

Its big parade ground bathed in peaceful sunlight, Fort Des Moines army post constitutes one of war's paradoxes as it lies somnolent through long summer afternoons. Stillness is broken by the whinny of a cavalry horse, the slam of a screen door or the squeal of a wheelbarrow as some errant soldier shoves it across the road, followed by a perspiring guard whose heavy rifle provides him, also, with a burden. . . . Soldiers are either in the shade of their barracks, far to the south on the rifle or artillery ranges, or busy in stables and truck barns. Officers drive "in to town," swap yarns in quarters, or visit headquarters on leisurely duties. Occasionally, when a ball game in a corner of the parade ground relieves the monotony, a generous sprinkling of color among the crowd of watchers announces the presence of wives and families of the army men. . . . Most of the manifold duties of post life are disposed of by the middle of the afternoon, with every soldier doing his bit. At present, say post officers, army personnel at the fort is nearly 100 below the full peacetime quota of 850, but the fall "crop" of recruits is expected to bring it up. . . . Two major units--the second squadron of the 14th cavalry and the third battalion of the 80th field artillery--are stationed there. Additional units include a hospital, quartermaster's, veterinarian's and exchange detachments, and a band. In addition to the regular personnel, eight reserve officers are on duty at the post with the CCC, of which Colonel [C.E.] Stodter is commander. . . .

Peacetime conditions at the post bring the men good food, good work distribution and ample time for relaxation, it is said. First call comes at 8:30 a.m., with reveille 10 minutes later. Mess is at 6:10 a.m. and is followed by thorough cleaning of barracks. Drill follows the barracks work. For the cavalymen it consists of exercising the horses or mounted pistol drill on the range, usually with dry-firing practice. The men, armed with the regulation army .45 Colt automatic pistol, maneuver on the range and while riding aim at targets, but do not fire. The cavalymen spend six hours and a half a day in the saddle. . . . For the artillerymen it consists of wheeling their heavy field pieces into position, loading with dummies, working problems, setting up communications, and other maneuvers.

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55. Des Moines Register, August 5, 1934. For more details, see Des Moines Register, July 21, 1935. Policies governing daily activity at Fort Des Moines during the 1930s are in Headquarters Fort Des Moines. Post Regulations. Fire Orders--Guard Orders. August 11, 1936. Copy in the History Library, State Historical Society of Iowa.

Drill ends in time for mess again at 11 a.m., when the heavy meal of the day is served. A sample menu includes steak, mashed potatoes, kidney beans, salad, rolls and butter, pudding and coffee. . . .

In the afternoon, the men do fatigue duty, which includes any of the regular duties of the post. An average of 30 men are on special duty, from telephone operators to mule skimmers, who do their own particular line of work and not other fatigue. The men enjoy half holidays Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoon. On other days they generally are through in the summer at 2:30 or 3 p.m. after which their time is their own until 4:10 p.m., when the cavalry answers water call and cares for its horses. . . . Supper is at 4:30, and retreat follows an hour and 20 minutes later. Every Wednesday night the men enjoy a dance. Tuesday and Thursday nights the post band gives concerts.

The decade of the 1940s brought profound organizational changes to Fort Des Moines. In May, 1940, the Fourteenth Cavalry with more than 500 horses vacated the post during the waning days of the equestrian arm, leaving only the Eightieth Field Artillery, a motorized unit, at the post.(56) Early in 1941 planning began to convert the fort into a 1000-man army induction center following the departure of all field forces. The transformation required construction of new facilities as well as modification of several existing buildings. In May the center opened, and recruits each spent an average of five days at Fort Des Moines undergoing processing examination prior to being sent to an army training facility.(57)

The conversion of the fort preceded the entry of the United States into World War II. Early in 1942, after that event occurred, the Army

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56. Commanding General, Seventh Corps Area, to Commanding Officer, Fort Des Moines, May 31, 1940, and subsequent indorsements. NA, RG 407. Project Decimal File, 1940-45. Military Posts and Reservations, Box 4425; Des Moines Tribune, April 29, 1940; Des Moines Register, May 22, 1940; Des Moines Tribune, May 27, 1940.

57. Headquarters Reception Center, Fort Des Moines, to Colonel John C. Pegram and Lieutenant Colonel Donaldson, Headquarters, Seventh Corps Area, March 6, 1941, and subsequent indorsements. Ibid.; Des Moines Register, February 26, 1942; Des Moines Register, July 16, 1942.

announced plans to establish a center where women might be trained in different service occupations. It was an innovative concept; prior to World War II the only women to serve in the army were members of the Army Nurse Corps. Fort Des Moines was chosen as the training center because of its existing facilities as well as its central location. The induction center was moved to Camp Dodge. General recruiting for the new unit, called the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), began in May, 1942, when more than 13,000 applicants took tests seeking entrance. Initially, only 440 women were selected.(58) On July 20, these began an eight-week WAAC officer training program at Fort Des Moines, where, reported Newsweek, "The old cavalry base, once called the 'Ritz Carlton of the Army' because of its luxurious equipment, trembled to unfamiliar sopranos." At the same time a class of 330 auxiliaries (privates) began a shorter course.(59)

Under the direction of Major (later Colonel) Oveta Culp Hobby, the WAAC prospered during the war years. At Fort Des Moines, so-called "West Point for Women," the officer candidate graduates at the First WAAC Training Center formed the cadre for ensuing training courses of five weeks duration at the post. Significantly, forty members of the initial officer class were black women. (One wartime graduate was Bernice Gaines Hughes, the first black women to attain the rank of lieutenant colonel in the United States armed forces.) WAAC organizational units consisted of the First Training Regiment, designated for officer candidates, the Second Training Regiment, for specialist training of enlisted enrollees, and the Third Training Regiment for basic training of enrollees. Training for enlisted enrollees at Fort Des Moines was in

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58. Des Moines Tribune, April 16, 1942; Des Moines Tribune, May 15, 1942; Des Moines Register, May 16, 1942; Des Moines Register, July 16, 1942; "WAAC. U.S. Women Troop to Enlist in Army's First All-Female Force," Life, XII (June 8, 1942), p. 26.

59. "Des Moines: Wac to Vet," Newsweek, XXVII (February 11, 1946), p. 15; "Army's Most Unusual Rookies are 'Processed' Into WAACS," The Nation, XX (July 27, 1942), p. 29. For an overview history of the WAC, see Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954).

noncombatant positions, primarily as clerks, drivers, cooks, machinists, and messengers. Their contributions freed many officers and men from clerical positions for active duty elsewhere including combat. As the war progressed, the need for more WAACs increased and further job classifications were created. Many WAAC personnel left Fort Des Moines upon graduation to serve in the Army Air Forces. These "Air WACs," as they were called, had endured six weeks of training at the post, more than was allotted the other enrollees. The women, whose ages ranged from twenty-one to forty-five, were evaluated on the basis of traits of leadership, character, experience, and ability to adapt to new conditions. Although the Fort Des Moines training camp was but one of three established by the army (the others were at Daytona Beach, Florida, and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia), it remained the largest WAAC reception and training center and the only one to prepare officers. The first class of auxiliaries to reach Fort Des Moines in good humor dubbed the center "Mrs. Hobby's Waacs Works." Quartered in barracks recently remodeled from the old cavalry stables, the women became known as "Hobby Horses."<sup>60</sup> Despite the prevalence of women on the post, some 800 officers and enlisted men filled staff positions under the commander of Fort Des Moines, Colonel Don C. Faith. WAAC officer trainees grew accustomed to a daily regimen of study and drill. A typical class at the Fort Des Moines Center was to occur thusly:

From reveille to taps at 11 p.m., the future WAAC officers will attend classes for about five hours, perform close-order drill for almost an hour, have physical training for another 45 minutes, and study for two hours in the evening. Grouped under the elms of the fort's parade ground until carpenters finish nineteen new classrooms, the pupils will spend a total of 21 hours on a course in processing (immunization, records, supplies, equipment), sixteen hours on inspection in barracks

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60. Memorandum from the Adjutant General, December 29, 1943. NA, RG 407. Classified Decimal File, 1943-45, Box 2174; WAC News, The Army Gal's Publication, IV (January 25, 1946), p. 2; "Major Hobby's WAACs," Time, XXXIX (May 25, 1942), p. 41; Blake Clark, "Ladies of the Army," Reader's Digest, XLII (May, 1943) pp. 85-88. Hobby later resigned as WAAC Director and Westray B. Boyce assumed the position. Des Moines Register, May 11, 1947.

and ranks, and the rest of their class time on hygiene, WAAC regulations, the care of equipment, map reading, defense against air attack, and the safeguarding of military information.(61)

One former WAC recalled the reaction of the women to the news of the Normandy invasion in June, 1944:

We were summoned in a body (all 10,000 of us Wacs) on the parade grounds at Ft. Des Moines in a drizzly mist. Here we were told it was "D" day--and we were to pray for our soldiers. . . . Many women had husbands, sweethearts, sons and brothers in this battle. I noticed one Wac in front of me drop to the ground and sob. Then scattered throughout this whole body of women soldiers, Wacs were dropping on the wet ground and sobbing. Suddenly the chaplain's voice was loud and firm: "Since God is on our side, victory is certain for them!" At that moment, the sun came through the clouds.

The same woman remembered the response to the news of Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945:

It was five in the evening, when the bells began to ring, and the whistle to blast. . . . I was in the Boomtown chapel at this time, talking to one of our wartime ministers. . . . I started to rush out of the door; I began to run as fast as my short legs would take me. The parade grounds, I reasoned, would be the arena for WAC reactions to the news. But I didn't get very far. A wave of Wacs met me running four abreast on the sidewalk. I didn't resist, but let this laughing, half-hysterical crowd sweep me back to the chapel, where they pushed their way in, falling to the floor on their knees, and giving silent thanks. To think, I marveled, that this would be their first reaction to the news. Later that evening the enlisted women formed a chain and rushed into the officers' quarters and made them join the chain. Many of the officers were informally attired in backless sundresses, but dignity was momentarily forgotten. The chain wound its way into the service club, PXs, and finally ended up on the parade grounds.(62)

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61. "Army Most Unusual Rookies," p. 30.

62. Alice Amyx Hugo, "Wacs--Memories of Fort Des Moines" (unpublished manuscript dated ca. 1960 in the History Library of the State Historical Society of Iowa).

Between 1942 and 1945, 72,141 women (65,076 enlisted, 7,065 officers) passed through the First WAC Training Center, Fort Des Moines, enroute to service in all wartime theaters. In October, 1945, following the peace, the post was converted from a training center to a WAC separation facility, operating until February, 1946, in that capacity and processing some 10,000 women back into civilian clothes. The temporary structures raised earlier to accommodate the WACs in training were made available as emergency veterans' housing later that month.(63)

With closure of the WAC Center, the army's need for retaining Fort Des Moines was gone and a determination was made to abandon the post. In February, 1946, the army turned the property composing Fort Des Moines over to the Federal Housing Authority by virtue of revocable permits. The property was shortly designated for ultimate disposal by the War Assets Administration. In December, the City of Des Moines acquired the tract under a renewable lease arrangement. Meantime, a population of veterans and their families occupied temporary housing converted from barracks formerly raised for the WACs along the south side of the fort. The former "Boomtown" site became known as the Fort Des Moines Veterans' Village and the buildings were all remodeled into apartment units. As of April, 1948, 900 families occupied the structures with a total population in excess of 3,000. Title remained vested in the United States, although provision for extending civil and criminal jurisdiction over the former army post eventually went to the State of Iowa. The City of Des Moines continued to operate the housing project through a commission established for the purpose.(64)

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63. "Des Moines: Wac to Vet," p. 15. The women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was changed to Women's Army Corps (WAC) on July 1, 1943.

64. Des Moines Register, February 15, 1946; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, Fort Des Moines Veterans Village, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds on H.R. 6188 (H.R. 5662). 80th Cong., 2d sess., 1948, passim; U.S., Congress, House, Conferring Jurisdiction over the Fort Des Moines Veterans' Village upon the State of Iowa, H. Rept. 1747 to Accompany H.R. 6188, 80th Cong., 2d sess., 1948, p. 2; U.S. Congress, Senate, Conferring (Continued)

In July, 1949, the House Committee on Public Works entertained a proposal to turn Fort Des Moines over to the State of Iowa for use by its National Guard, a measure supported by the City of Des Moines. At that time, however, several of the original buildings had been returned to army jurisdiction for use by the Organized Reserve Corps and the Department of the Air Force, and the proposed transfer for state militia purposes did not conform to the requirements of existing legislation regarding surplus property disposal.(65) Ultimately, the measure was resolved in conference committee, duly passed Congress September 30, 1950, and was signed by the President. In the end, however, the outbreak of the Korean War brought about a reassessment of the military need for Fort Des Moines, culminating with the repeal of the transfer legislation. In 1953, when the United States Government sought once again to dispose of the surplus property, the State of Iowa rejected the proposal, directing its interest in the old post to the City of Des Moines. The city agreed not only to pay half the appraised value of the land and improvements, but to maintain for several years contracts regarding the Fort Des Moines Veterans Village.(66)

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64. (cont.) Jurisdiction over the Fort Des Moines Veterans' Village Upon the State of Iowa, S. Rept. 1585 to Accompany H.R. 6188, 80th Cong., 2d sess., 1948. See also, Frank C. Rice, "Des Moines Provides Emergency Housing for World War II Veterans and Their Families" (mimeographed report dated January 27, 1950, in the Des Moines Public Library), pp. 2-3.

65. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, Hearings . . . on H.R. 4569, a Bill Authorizing the Transfer of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, to the State of Iowa, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, pp. 1, 2, 4, 5. See also U.S. Congress, House, Authorizing the Transfer of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, to the State of Iowa, H. Rept. 1095 to Accompany H.R. 4569, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, pp. 1-3.

66. Des Moines Register, October 1, 1950; U.S. Congress, House, Authorizing the Transfer of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, to the State of Iowa, H. Rept. 3097 to Accompany H.R. 4569, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, pp. 1-2; U.S. Congress, House, Repealing the Act of September 30, 1950, (Continued)



Since the mid-1950s, the government disposed of most of the Fort Des Moines property, retaining only a few of the original buildings at the post for recruiting and training purposes. In 1975-76 a thousand-man training center for the U.S. Army Reserve was built at Fort Des Moines, and further construction was scheduled to occur in 1980-81.<sup>(67)</sup> Portions of the original tract have been sold to various public agencies and private concerns. Some parts went to the city of Des Moines and now encompass a park, zoo, and golf course. Major construction has occurred on the parade ground, where today an apartment complex stands. Despite the changes, and despite the fact that many of the original buildings at Fort Des Moines have been demolished (most between 1956 and 1971), the significance of the post as a milestone of black history and of United States military history has been recognized, most formally in its 1976 designation as a National Historic Landmark.

The bestowal of National Landmark status on Fort Des Moines is appropriate from several standpoints. The black officers' provisional training center established there in 1917 represented the first extensive effort by the army to educate black officer candidates for the rigors of combat leadership assignments. Many graduates of the Fort Des Moines curriculum performed meritoriously overseas during World War I, serving in the several segregated army units. Also, many blacks attended the training camp for black medical personnel, which functioned at the same time as the officers' training center. Similarly, attendees of this school served in valuable capacities with the black troops in France. Significantly, the Fort Des Moines experience represented a liberalism by

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66. (cont.) Authorizing the Transfer to the State of Iowa of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, H. Rept. 440 to Accompany H.R. 4978, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 1953, pp. 1-3; U.S. Congress, Senate, Repealing the Act of September 30, 1950, Authorizing the Transfer to the State of Iowa of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, S. Rept. 452 to Accompany H.R. 4978, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 1953, pp. 1-2.

67. Lieutenant Colonel John G. Flora to Adrian D. Anderson, November 28, 1979. National Historic Landmark files, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

the army towards blacks respecting their attainment of positions of responsibility in the military service, heretofore practically a closed system. The change was largely due to pressures brought from the black community based upon patriotic and social motives. During and shortly after World War I, Fort Des Moines gained further recognition in military and civilian medical circles for innovations in the field of orthopedics research. The development of economical and structurally efficient methods for producing such artificial limbs as the "Fort Des Moines Leg" gave the post a distinction that was nationally acknowledged by specialists in the field.

Fort Des Moines is further significant as the World War II home of the first Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC, later WAC) officer and enlisted training center in the United States. The development of this adjunct for utilizing the services of women in other than nursing capacities reflected the army's recognition of the value of women as contributors in various fields to the country's war effort, as well as the patriotism of women during the national wartime crisis. More than 72,000 women completed training to fulfill diverse noncombat roles that immeasurably aided the military mission. As a result, the Women's Army Corps became a permanent fixture in the organization of the United States Army. Furthermore, the existence of the WAC facility at Fort Des Moines fostered a broadening of the role of women in civil life as well, by virtue of expanding vocational opportunities that carried over into postwar American society.

### PART III. ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Functionally, Fort Des Moines reflected the late nineteenth-century trend toward centralization of the army's far-flung western garrisons at leading rail centers from which troops might be dispatched as needed. In its arrangement, the fort emulated many other large, permanent, non-coastal stations known as "interior posts" raised in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such posts were not built for defensive purposes, but provided bases of operations for their garrisons for either emergency or routine activities.

Architecturally, most of the masonry buildings erected between 1903 and 1910 at Fort Des Moines evinced practical designs combining a stylistic amalgam of elements from Classical Revival and Renaissance Revival. These elements, more or less common to most of the structures, include symmetry, repetitive window openings, use of pedimented entries, rusticated basements, bracketed cornices, palladian windows, and segmental and jack arches. Constructed from standardized plans and specifications developed by War Department architects, most army buildings raised between ca. 1890 and ca. 1915 exhibited uniform design characteristics that represented the attainment of a unique military utilitarian style widely replicated at posts throughout the country. For lack of a better term, the type might be designated Turn of the Century American Military.

The ground plan of Fort Des Moines adhered to a basic east-west orientation of the parade as specified by the Quartermaster General's office at least as early as 1860. Fort construction followed formalized principles that governed building layout and erection. Individual structures were raised in strict accordance with the standardized plans approved by the army hierarchy. These designs underwent periodic revision by the Quartermaster General, and those in force at the time Fort Des Moines began construction dated between 1899 and 1902. Later, plans developed between 1902 and 1909 guided the erection of post

buildings through 1910.(1) Major Reuben B. Turner of the Quartermaster Department initiated the construction of the post, followed by Captain Luther Hardeman of the Eleventh Cavalry. When completed, Fort Des Moines proved to be an architecturally and aesthetically pleasing place. "There has been constructed a fort that excites the admiration of every one of its many visitors. Many an old army officer will tell you that Fort Des Moines is one of the most beautiful posts in the country."(2)

The rectangular parade at Fort Des Moines measured 900 feet by 2000 feet. The first buildings to be raised around it were financed from a \$200,000 congressional appropriation of 1901 which stipulated that the funding should also cover grading, construction of roads, walks, gutters, a reservation fence, and implementation of a water system. The board of officers earlier convened to examine the site of the post determined that most building materials could best be obtained locally. Specifically, the board recommended that vitrified brick be utilized for foundations of the buildings (although it appears that limestone was used instead) and that it be purchased from brick plants located near the site at a cost of about \$10 per thousand. Stone could be procured from a quarry along a railroad line less than thirty miles away, while ordinary bricks could be purchased locally at a rate of between \$6.50 and \$8.00 per thousand. The post was to be supplied with piped water at a rate of 200,000 gallons per day through agreement with the city. Further, both the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad and the Street Electric Railway Company proposed to run spurs onto the reservation. An easement through adjacent lands to the Racoon River would be provided so that post sewage could be dumped. Construction of the buildings at Fort Des

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1. For background data on the construction of military posts, see Willard B. Robinson, American Forts: Architectural Form and Function (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977). For specific War Department dictums governing the erection of forts, see Regulations concerning Barracks and Quarters of the Army of the United States, 1860 (Washington: George W. Bowman, Printer, 1861).

2. "Fort Des Moines," The Midwestern Magazine, IV (September, 1909) p. 31; Fort Des Moines Post, September 26, 1918.

Des Moines was to occur sequentially by squadron, i.e., sufficient buildings would be raised to accommodate one squadron of cavalry at a time before subsequent construction occurred.(3)

Major construction of Fort Des Moines occurred between 1903 and 1910, with most of it taking place in 1904-05. Existing structures on the site, consisting of a Victorian farm house and a red barn, were put to use as non-commissioned officers' quarters and stable, respectively. In 1903 there were erected on the site four sets of married officers' quarters, one double officers' quarters, one double barracks, one double non-commissioned officers' quarters, one cavalry stable, one quartermaster and subsistence storehouse, one bakery, and one coal shed, plus one flagstaff. By late 1904, these buildings had more than trebled with the addition of one commanding officers' quarters, two field officers' quarters, five double officers' quarters, one bachelor officers' quarters, one married officers' quarters, one administration building, one guard house, one band barracks, three double cavalry barracks, three double non-commissioned officers' quarters, one hospital, one hospital steward's quarters, seven stable barns, and four stable guard houses. In addition, there stood completed two blacksmith shops, one granary storehouse, one electrical transformer substation, quartermaster shops, one wood shed, two magazines, one oil house, one hay shed, and one lumber shed. All of these structures were ready for occupancy.(4)

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3. "Proceedings of a Board of Officers," December 6, 1900. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box 2367; Statement by Acting Secretary of War Meiklejohn, December 20, 1900. Ibid.; Quartermaster General M.I. Ludington to Root, January 23, 1902. Ibid.; Root to Adjutant General, January 24, 1901. Ibid.

4. Fort Des Moines, Described and Illustrated (Des Moines: The Des Moines Booklet Company, 1904), p. 2; "Report Department of the Missouri," August 9, 1904, in Annual Report of the War Department . . . 1904, p. 42; NA, RG 92. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. Entry 410. "Description of Special and Regular Drawings." 1893-1915. 3 vols. Vol. II, p. 162; Deputy Quartermaster General George Ruhlen to the Quartermaster General, September 20, 1904. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box 3531; NA, RG 77. Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Prints: Completion Photographs of Military Housing (Continued)

In 1905 construction continued, with seventeen additional buildings raised. These consisted of two field officers' quarters, three sets of double officers quarters, two double cavalry barracks, one double non-commissioned officers' quarters, four cavalry stables, two stable guard houses, one ordnance office and warehouse, one root house, and one sewage disposal plant. The post sewage system consisted of vitrified sewer pipe of different diameters. Instead of discharging refuse directly into the river, however, radiating pipes carried sewage into a trunk line, which conveyed it to a septic reservoir. There sedimentation occurred and the matter received chemical treatment before the liquid residue was emptied into the river, supposedly precluding contamination of the stream. Surface water from the post did not enter the sewer system, but was accommodated by a storm sewer.

Only one structure was built in 1906, a bandstand, although buildings raised the following year consisted of one field officers' quarters, one double officer quarters, one double non-commissioned officers' quarters, one cavalry drill hall, one civilian employees' quarters, and one veterinary stable and medicine storehouse. In 1908 only four structures were built: a receiving station for the quartermaster storehouse, a crematory, a mounted guard shelter, and a wagon shed, and in 1909 four sets of double officers' quarters were completed. The next year saw the erection of a post chapel and several lesser buildings, such as a carpenter shop, dead house, and another coal shed.(5)

For the construction of 1905, more than 400 men were employed, with an estimated monthly payroll of \$10,000. Work progressed rapidly so that

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4. (cont.) Projects, 1927-36. Album 4, Box 3. Still Picture Branch; Army and Navy Journal, September 3, 1904; Army and Navy Journal, October 15, 1904; NA, RG 77. Entry 393. "Historical Record of Buildings" and "Record of Equipment and Condition of Buildings" at Active Army Posts, 1905-42. Box 51. On the day before Easter, 1908, children searched for eggs hidden in the "old red barn." Army and Navy Journal, April 18, 1908.

5. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51; "Fort Des Moines Sewer System" (undated document in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Folder BG F7753a1).

the post might accommodate another cavalry squadron. By March, 1906, new quarters were ready to receive the First Squadron, Eleventh Cavalry, which arrived at Fort Des Moines early that month, and for the first time in the post's brief history a complete regiment was in garrison. Another facility raised in 1905 was a gymnasium to provide for the physical exercise and recreation of the command.(6)

In August, 1906, the departmental commander remarked on the walls and floors of the barracks:

There is some difficulty in keeping walls of barracks in a clean and presentable condition, owing to the use of soft coal and excessive dust. In the barrack of Troop I [Eleventh Cavalry] the walls had been painted below the wainscoting a dark green and above calcimined a light green. These colors blended well and were reported to be durable. In the barracks of Troops G and I the floors had received especial attention, having been oiled and waxed with paraffin so that it was possible to keep them immaculately clean with very little work and prolong the life of the floor. In Troop I brush polishers, brushes, and paraffin had been paid for by the men, and the troop commander recommends that similar materials be issued to troops.(7)

One year later an inspector reported the ongoing buildings and grounds at Fort Des Moines to be in excellent condition, although storage capacity was deemed insufficient pending the completion of an addition to the subsistence storehouse. "When finished," reported the departmental commander, "this post will be one of the most complete, substantial,

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6. Army and Navy Journal, March 11, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, June 3, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, July 29, 1905; Army and Navy Journal, March 17, 1906. The gymnasium proved a popular diversionary gathering place. For example, in February, 1909, "a lively wrestling bout was held at the gymnasium last week, in which Privates Temple and Strathoam, of Troop H [Second Cavalry], and Private Doucette, of Troop B, were victorious over their contestants from Des Moines and Fort Dodge. Army and Navy Journal, March 6, 1909.

7. "Report Department of the Missouri," August 28, 1906, in Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1906 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), p. 102.

modern cavalry posts in the country." (8) By then the street car line had been finished and plans called for the completion of a steam rail line to the post, thereby enabling transport of men and equipment during emergencies to the central trunk lines located in Des Moines. (9)

Late in 1907 groundbreaking occurred for additional officers' quarters at the fort. These, comprising three sets of double units, were ready for occupancy early in 1909. In December, installation of an underground telephone system took place, with the Mutual Telephone Company of Des Moines providing service to fifty-nine government telephones at the post. Meantime, the Iowa Telephone Company of Des Moines furnished private telephone service to forty-five subscribers at Fort Des Moines. (10) Answering a long-felt need at the post where heretofore a room in the post exchange had sufficed for religious services, early in 1909 the Secretary of War approved funding of \$15,000 to raise a chapel and construction was completed the following year. A dead house, or mortuary, was added to the hospital complex at that time. (11)

After 1910 little building activity proceeded, especially following the departure of most of the garrison for the Mexican border early the next year. An inspection in May, 1911, found the buildings "in excellent condition, and . . . well cared for." Even though the fort was

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8. "Report Department of the Missouri," August 12, 1907, in War Department, U.S.A. Annual Reports, 1907 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), p. 105.

9. Ibid.

10. Army and Navy Journal, January 4, 1908; Army and Navy Journal, January 9, 1909; "Report of the Department of the Missouri," August 1, 1910, in War Department Annual Reports, 1910 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 75; NA, RG 77. "Historical Record of Buildings," Box 51.

11. Ibid.; General Orders No. 49, March 15, 1909. General Orders and Circulars, War Department, 1909 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 20; Army and Navy Journal, May 5, 1906; Adjutant General to Hull, June 25, 1907. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box 4073.



practically abandoned during this period, army authorities envisioned its future value, in 1913 calling for \$40,000 to complete the post hospital, specifically one ward wing and a rear annex. This expansion did not immediately happen, however.(12)

The advent of World War I and the necessity for operating Fort Des Moines for training purposes brought new construction. In the fall of 1917, before the start of the Training Camp for Colored Medical Personnel, the Secretary of War authorized expenditures of \$7,575 for building six each bathhouses, mess halls, and kitchens, for latrines, and for the placement of flooring in four stables preparatory to converting them into barracks. In addition, on request of the Surgeon General, two temporary psychiatric and two temporary isolation wards were built adjacent to the hospital, a storehouse was converted into a receiving ward, and the post exchange/gymnasium building was converted into a ward to serve as a dispensary and eye, ear, nose, throat, and dental building. This latter work, undertaken on contract with the firm of Charles Weitz Sons, remained incomplete until May, 1918. Further, in December, 1918, work began on a Knights of Columbus Hall costing \$20,000. This structure, donated to the government on its completion in late January, 1919, included an auditorium/gymnasium, a lounge, and chapel, as well as a library. The Red Cross and YMCA erected or occupied buildings not far from the hospital. The K of C, YMCA, and Red Cross facilities all constituted welfare buildings. The first two were situated at the southeast corner of the parade; the K of C Hall stood nearer the northeast corner, next to the chapel.

Other construction involved the erection of two large water tanks, one atop a tower, with a joint capacity of 175,000 gallons, plus conversion

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12. "Report of the Department of the Missouri," July 15, 1911, in War Department Annual Reports, 1911 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), p. 64; "Report of The Surgeon General, August 30, 1913," in War Department Annual Reports, 1913 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), p. 582.

of Ward I (present Building No. 66) to a re-education facility with woodworking, machine shops, and academic classrooms. Also, a new electrical substation was built in 1919 when the post changed from a single-phase to a three-phase electrical system. Approximate cost of the World War I improvements at Fort Des Moines was \$244,148.00. Most additions and changes were implemented during the time the post served as a base and general hospital in 1918-1919. Plans to expand General Hospital No. 26 into a building in Des Moines ended upon the signing of the Armistice concluding hostilities with the Central Powers.(13)

Throughout the 1920s most new construction at Fort Des Moines consisted of temporary buildings raised for the Citizens Military Training Camps held there, although in 1922 a swimming pool was installed at the post. Sixteen kitchen and mess hall units were built in 1923-24 for the CMTC, along with five bath houses and toilets. Similar construction carried into the early 1930s, when two lavatories for CMTC personnel were completed. Meantime, in the mid-1920s the army post facilities reportedly could accommodate "42 officers, 3 warrant officers, 16 non-commissioned staff officers, 1267 enlisted men, and 1260 animals, also hospital accommodations for 36 sick."(14) In December, 1928, fire gutted one side of a double barracks (present Building No. 55) and heavily damaged the other (Building No. 56). On authority of the War

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13. Memorandum to Commanding Officer, Central Department, May 31, 1917. NA, RG 94. Document File, Box 8983; Bliss to Secretary of War, September 19, 1917. NA, RG 407. Central Decimal Files. Project Files, 1917-1925, Box 1169; Scott to Secretary of War, September 19, 1917. *Ibid.*; "War Diary of U.S. General Hospital No. 26." NA, RG 391. World War I Organization Records, Medical Department, General Hospital #26, Box 1066; Medical Department of the United States in the World War, V, 569-71; Order of Battle, III, 868; Benedict Crowell, America's Munitions, 1917-1918. Report of Benedict Crowell, The Assistant Secretary of War, Director of Munitions (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), p. 562; "Report, Ft. Des Moines, Iowa, App. 2, Vol. 151. Const. Div. 1919." NA, RG 391.

14. R.T. Edwards, "History of Fort Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa" (manuscript dated March 19, 1925, in the History Library, State Historical Society of Iowa), p. 3.

Department, \$26,000 was expended the following year in reconstructing the destroyed interior and otherwise repairing both buildings. Almost exactly two years later, on December 18, 1930, fire consumed yet another double barracks, necessitating the salvage of one unit (present Building No. 58) at a cost of \$15,000. A major renovation of the post hospital took place in the summer of 1929, with the various floor functions changed to improve space limitations pending approval for a structural addition to the building. In 1932 a theatre, an oil house, and two ordnance magazines for containing combustibles were finished at the post. Facilities erected in 1934 and 1935 for members of the Civilian Conservation Corps included a mess hall, a recreation hall, an officers' quarters, a garage and repair shop, and a camp headquarters building--all completed along the south edge of the reservation. During the former year a Civil Works Administration project began to repaint many quarters and to overhaul the plumbing in them. Roads were also reconditioned. Throughout the garrison a large number of garages now existed, most of them probably built before and after World War I, but with exact dates of construction unknown.(15)

Use and occupation of some of the buildings at Fort Des Moines during this period was described as follows:

Visitors to the post find field officers, with a few exceptions, housed in separate quarters. Captains and their families occupy duplex houses. First lieutenants have ground floor apartments; second lieutenants live upstairs. Warrant officers have half an upper apartment, and noncommissioned married officers also may have apartments, depending on their rank, whether master, staff, or first sergeant. . . . There is an

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15. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51; Captain M.S. Williamson to Commanding Officer, Fort Des Moines, October 24, 1927. NA, RG 94. Central Files, 1926-39, Box 2998; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, January 16, 1920. Ibid. Lieutenant Colonel W.B. Wallace to the Adjutant General, March 14, 1929. Ibid.; Surgeon, Fort Des Moines, to Surgeon General, July 2, 1929. Ibid.; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, August 30, 1932. Ibid.; Post Ordnance Officer to Chief of Ordnance, January 28, 1932. Ibid.; Des Moines Tribune, November 24, 1929; Des Moines Register, December 18, 1930; Des Moines Tribune, January 8, 1934.

officers' club for single officers, and those with families who wish to pay their own rent may in instances take up quarters outside the post. The buildings at the post are almost all brick. They include five separate houses, 15 duplexes, 21 combined quarters, six double barracks, 12 stables, hospital and veterinary hospital, riding hall, fire department, dance hall, theater, and other buildings. A swimming pool is near the west end of the parade ground. . . . The stables at present house 450 horses--more than there are cavalrymen. Some buildings hold machine guns, of which there are 12, the artillery's 16 howitzers and two machine guns, pistols and grenades and other ordnance stores.(16)

Few further additions were made at Fort Des Moines prior to World War II. Early in 1935 Colonel C.E. Stodter, post commander, sought nearly \$500,000 for new construction and improvements to older structures, which were deteriorating badly. Furthermore, the enlargement of the garrison, plus the continued use of the facility by the CCC rendered many of the older buildings inadequate for army requirements. An immediate need was for an addition to the post hospital, which was handling many CCC patients. However, only \$50,000 was ultimately authorized for Fort Des Moines, most of it earmarked for repairs to barracks. In September, 1935, workmen began erecting a \$17,000 CCC warehouse, completed the following year.(17)

Further maintenance and repair work was authorized in 1936 with the allotment of \$40,000 from Works Progress Administration funds. During 1937 automatic stoking heating systems were installed in thirty-four buildings to replace hand-fired systems, and plans were laid to install thirty-one others over the next two years. A fire in late November, 1938, destroyed a stable that had been converted into a garage, together with twenty-seven army vehicles housed therein. Construction in 1939 included another water tower and an extension to the bakery. By 1940 a

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16. Des Moines Register, August 5, 1934.

17. Des Moines Tribune, January 7, 1935; Des Moines Register, January 22, 1935; Des Moines Register, August 15, 1935; Des Moines Register, August 21, 1935; Des Moines Register, September 22, 1935.

new hospital was badly needed and several more stables had been converted into garages by enlarging the entrances and installing steel doors. In 1941 a medical induction building, a finance building, a mess hall, and a new sewage pump house (to deliver sewage to the Des Moines city sewerage system) were erected. The bakery was enlarged once again. (18)

On the eve of World War II army officials proposed to enlarge Fort Des Moines as a training center, a design that entailed much construction. With the decision to instead locate a reception center there, plans were made to erect only an induction building, a 1000-man mess hall, and a finance office, all of frame construction. In July, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved a \$1,325,623 WPA project looking to the rehabilitation and improvement of the grounds and buildings at Fort Des Moines. A major objective was to be the conversion of the cavalry drill hall into a recreation center. (19)

These building plans changed after Fort Des Moines was selected as the principal training center for the WAAC. In May, 1942, preliminary plans were drawn for constructing 173 "semi-permanent" buildings and reconditioning eleven barracks and nine stable/garages for living accommodations. The projected new buildings, to be of frame and brick and tile, included barracks, classrooms, mess halls, a recreation hall, and a chapel, and were to be erected on land immediately south of the post.

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18. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51; Commanding Officer, Fort Des Moines, to Commanding General, Seventh Corps Area, April 25, 1940. NA, RG 407. Project Decimal File, 1940-45. Military Posts and Reservations, Box 4425; Lieutenant Colonel Edmond H. Leavey to the Adjutant General, February 14, 1941. Ibid.; Captain N.J. Safourek to the Adjutant General, June 17, 1941. Ibid.; Colonel F.H. Pope to the Surgeon General, June 23, 1941. Ibid.; Des Moines Register, October 6, 1936; Des Moines Register, July 4, 1937; Des Moines Register, November 24, 1938.

19. Des Moines Register, October 17, 1940; Des Moines Register, April 24, 1941; Des Moines Tribune, June 10, 1941; Des Moines Register, July 20, 1941; Des Moines Tribune, July 22, 1941; Des Moines Tribune, July 30, 1941.

Southeast of the original fort buildings a new hospital was slated for construction. The old cavalry drill hall was now to become a winter drill hall for the women. In June, initial building contracts totaling \$340,000 were awarded to local firms for the construction, with the work to be completed by August 14. Total estimated cost for refurbishing the old buildings and raising the new was \$5,000,000. The contract for reconditioning the original barracks went to the firm of William Knudson and Sons, Des Moines, for \$90,000, while that for converting the garages into barracks later went to O.L. Wiltsie, Des Moines, for approximately \$450,000.(20)

The Des Moines Tribune for August 14, 1942, gave the following account of the progress of the ongoing construction of "Boomtown," as it was called:

Already completed at the fort are the 11 old cavalry barracks buildings which were entirely renovated and which are being used to house the 669 officer candidates and 359 basic auxiliaries who already are in camp. Nine new frame classroom buildings also are virtually completed. . . . Also now near completion is the reconstruction of nine old cavalry stables buildings into modern barracks buildings. Each of these buildings will house 150 women. The structures have been completely reconditioned with new floors and special added sections housing showers, baths, toilets, laundry rooms and ironing facilities. The only thing to destroy the illusion that these are entirely new buildings is the hay door of each structure, where hay for the horses formerly was swung aloft.

Workmen this week started work on the new cantonment area where 63 new barracks are to be completed by Nov. 2. Ten of the buildings already are well under way. Each of these buildings will house 50 women, making a total of 3,150 women to be cared for in the new area south of the old post buildings. A whole new area of some 20 acres is being laid out immediately south of the fort and bulldozers are now busy grading new company streets. Also well under construction now are the 12 new ward buildings of the hospital group. Built in two rows of six each, each row of buildings is being connected by a covered walk and the group in turn is linked with the old

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20. Des Moines Tribune, May 22, 1942; Des Moines Tribune, June 5, 1942; Des Moines Tribune, June 18, 1942.

regular post hospital. Construction also is under way on two new recreation halls to take the place of one overcrowded building which originally was designed as only a temporary structure. WAAC officials said Friday that it may be necessary to add to the present water storage facilities at the post, by erecting a new water tower. Engineers now are studying this possibility. Meanwhile, larger motors are being installed at the post pumping station to take care of the additional load. Two other large new buildings now nearly complete are the bachelor officers quarters and officers mess building. These are at the northwest corner of the camp in the exact opposite direction from the WAAC cantonment area. The buildings are for regular army bachelor officers who will assist in the WAAC training program.(21)

While the construction proceeded, many women who arrived at Fort Des Moines for training in the summer and autumn of 1942 took up residence in downtown hotels, such as the Plaza, Savery, and Chamberlain, in the Colliseum and the Oransky Building, and in buildings at Drake University, pending completion of the new quarters. In 1943 two large wooden water tanks, each of 200,000-gallon capacity were raised at the fort to fill the needs of the greatly enlarged garrison. Wood was used instead of steel because the latter was required for war industry purposes.(22)

After the war and the closure of Fort Des Moines in 1946 the former "Boomtown" quarters, along with other post buildings, became surplus property. Ultimately the buildings, turned over to the city of Des Moines, were modified into apartments and continued in service as veterans' housing. By the autumn of 1947, more than 920 families occupied the structures, a number that had dwindled to fifty-eight ten years later. In 1956 demolition of the old tilebrick units began, and by

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21. For more details, see Des Moines Register, August 23, 1942. For an historical and archeological assessment of the "Boomtown" area, see Dale R. Henning, "A Cultural Resources Survey (Phase I) of a Portion (27.9 acres) of Fort Des Moines, Iowa" (unpublished manuscript dated January 4, 1981, in the Historic Preservation Office of the State Historical Society of Iowa).

22. WAC News, The Army Gal's Publication, IV (January 25, 1946), p. 2; Des Moines Register, March 7, 1943.

the next year, when the site became used for training army reservists, all were gone.(23)

In 1957-59 the army invested more than \$400,000 trying to rehabilitate the brick barracks along the south side of the parade and performing maintenance on the electrical, water, and sewer systems.(24) Attempts by Iowa army reserve officials to have the post reactivated, however, did not succeed, and between 1956 and 1967 many other buildings at the post were demolished, including most of the original officers' quarters on the north and west sides of the parade ground. Some remaining buildings have been used and maintained by other federal agencies, including the General Services Administration and the army and navy reserve forces, and by local government offices. In 1971 the Iowa Realty Company acquired title to acreage comprising the parade ground through a land exchange agreement and late in the decade completed construction of twelve apartment units covering roughly one half of the tract. In 1983 a major restoration of the post chapel took place.(25) Today the thirty-seven original buildings surviving from Fort Des Moines comprise the Fort Des Moines National Historic Landmark. Each is discussed below.

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24. Des Moines Tribune, April 16, 1959.

25. Des Moines Register, June 4, 1976; Polk County Historical Society Newsletter, XXIV (June, 1986).



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PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of Fort Des Moines Historic Complex was undertaken by the Eastern Team, Branch of Planning, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement coordinated among the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Department of the Army, and the Iowa State Office of Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the Army's proposed expropriation of Fort Des Moines property. Jerome A. Greene, Historian, was the HABS project coordinator and compiler of the historical data. Field work and compilation of architectural data was accomplished by Greene and Louis W. Anderson, Historical Architect. Site plans were prepared by Terri A. Urbanowski, Landscape Architect. Photographs were taken by Larry Day, of Grimes, Iowa, in December, 1986, and January, 1987.